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## **Michigan Receives Grant To Benefit Student-Led Health Initiatives In Cities Of Promise Middle Schools Across State**

Michigan Department of Community Health (MDCH) Director Janet Olszewski announced today that MDCH has been awarded a \$5 million grant from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation to empower middle school students in underserved communities to drive policy, environmental, and behavioral changes related to physical inactivity, unhealthy eating and tobacco use.

The “Generation with Promise” initiative will begin with two middle schools in Benton Harbor and eight middle schools in southeast Michigan (Pontiac, Detroit, Hamtramck and Highland Park). These schools have been selected to participate in the most intensive level of the project – receiving grants for assessment, planning, and implementation of school health improvement efforts.

In addition, middle schools in Saginaw, Flint, and Muskegon Heights also will be eligible to receive small grants, and students will be invited to participate in a Youth Summit and other leadership-building opportunities.

“We are grateful to the W.K. Kellogg Foundation for generously supporting our efforts to reduce health care costs and demonstrate that healthy students, employees and community members are a great investment,” said Janet Olszewski, MDCH Director. “MDCH and its partners have built a solid foundation and developed evidence-based tools that will strengthen this project considerably.”

The four-year “Generation with Promise” project – spearheaded by Michigan Surgeon General Dr. Kimberlydawn Wisdom – links Governor Jennifer M. Granholm’s *Cities of Promise* initiative in vulnerable communities with the Surgeon General’s *Michigan Steps Up* healthy lifestyles initiative. This unprecedented project strives to lessen racial and ethnic disparities in health risk behaviors, increase access to culturally appropriate, understandable and meaningful information, and create opportunities for sustainable changes that are self-empowering and student-led. Community mentor teams will work directly with youth to support student leadership development.

“Obesity and tobacco use will continue to have a devastating impact on Michigan’s health and economy if we do not invest in prevention today,” Wisdom said. “Overweight children are more likely to be obese as adults and suffer from chronic disease, and half of Michigan’s current smokers in grades nine to twelve report that they began smoking between ages 11 and 14, making early intervention critical.”

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While education around these issues is important, Wisdom said, information does not easily transfer into behavior change if students do not have the opportunity and support to make healthy choices throughout their day and throughout their educational career.

The W.K. Kellogg Foundation was established in 1930 “to help people help themselves through the practical application of knowledge and resources to improve their quality of life and that of future generations.” The Foundation targets its grants toward specific areas, including health, food systems and rural development, youth and education, and philanthropy and volunteerism. Grants are concentrated in the United States, Latin America and the Caribbean, and the southern African countries of Botswana, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, South Africa, Swaziland, and Zimbabwe. For further information, please visit the Foundation's Web site at [www.wkkf.org](http://www.wkkf.org).

To learn more about Michigan Steps Up and find out how your school can make healthy changes, please visit [www.michiganstepsup.org](http://www.michiganstepsup.org).

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